

Gas STAR Gold Program

Introduction

- Methane is an important short-lived climate pollutant and a potent greenhouse gas, with 28 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide over a 100 year time horizon. The oil and gas sector is one of the leading sources of anthropogenic methane emissions in the United States, with annual emissions of approximately 160 million metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMTCO₂e).
- Since 1993, EPA's Natural Gas STAR Program has successfully collaborated with the oil and natural gas industry on implementation of methane reduction technologies and practices. Gas STAR Partners have identified over 50 specific cost-effective technologies and practices, and have reported over 1 trillion cubic feet in cumulative methane emissions reductions.
- EPA has also made progress in reducing methane emissions from the oil and gas sector through regulatory action, since methane reductions are a co-benefit of New Source Performance Standards aimed at reducing volatile organic compounds from new and modified sources. However, there still remains significant opportunity to further reduce methane emissions.
- The President's Climate Action Plan directed the Administration to develop a comprehensive interagency strategy to reduce methane emissions. The strategy sets forth a plan to reduce both domestic and international methane emissions through incentive-based programs and the Administration's existing authorities.
- As part of that strategy, EPA will build on the success of the Natural Gas STAR Program to provide an opportunity for oil and gas companies interested in strengthening their commitment to reduce methane emissions. Several companies have expressed interest in taking additional steps to reduce methane emissions and this program would recognize and encourage those efforts.
- In the coming months, EPA will initiate a process for receiving and incorporating stakeholder input on the proposed elements of an enhanced Gas STAR "Gold" Program, with plans for a formal program launch in late 2014.

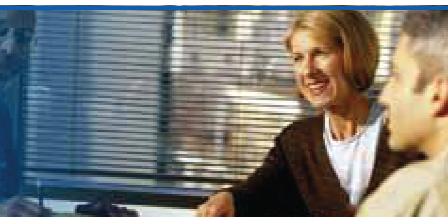
Overview

- As an additional element of its successful Natural Gas STAR Program, EPA is proposing a voluntary, facility-based, methane-reduction program for leading oil and gas companies.
- The proposed Gas STAR Gold Program will recognize facilities throughout the oil production and the entire natural gas value chain – production, gathering and boosting, processing, transmission, storage, and distribution – that achieve "Gas STAR Gold" status. Facilities will achieve Gas STAR Gold status by implementing a comprehensive suite of protocols for reducing methane emissions through readily-available, cost-effective technologies and best management practices.

Goals of the Proposed Gas STAR Gold Program

1. Showcase facilities that are already achieving methane emissions reductions.
2. Encourage facilities to identify and implement opportunities to achieve further methane reductions.
3. Create a framework for credible, transparent, and consistent reporting on facilities that can be easily understood and compared.
4. Recognize progress that companies are making in achieving emissions reductions relative to their overall operations.





Proposed Program

- EPA has identified a set of approximately 20 high-emitting methane sources at oil and gas facilities that form the core of the proposed Gas STAR Gold Program. For each emissions source, EPA has identified a specific set of “Gas STAR Gold protocols” based on best practices and technologies identified through the Natural Gas STAR Program and, where applicable, existing regulations such as New Source Performance Standards. To achieve “Gold STAR status,” a facility would implement all applicable protocols at that facility.
- EPA proposes to confer special recognition (e.g., Platinum level status) upon companies that achieve Gas STAR Gold status for a high percentage (to be specified) of their facilities.
- EPA estimates that the Gas STAR Gold program could achieve additional, voluntary methane reductions of up to 14 MMT CO₂e annually within five years.
- The current Natural Gas STAR Program will continue to provide industry partners with useful tools to achieve voluntary methane emissions reductions, including annual reporting of achievements, technology transfer workshops, and opportunities to promote information sharing.

Program Implementation

- Implementation of the Gold STAR program is intended to ensure that the program is transparent, minimizes partners’ burden, and leverages existing information and programs to the extent possible. For example, EPA proposes to streamline reporting requirements for facilities seeking Gold STAR status by using existing facility definitions from the petroleum and natural gas systems source category (Subpart W) of the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program (GHGRP) and leveraging data reported to the GHGRP to the extent practicable.
- EPA also proposes reporting on an annual basis for all Gold-STAR facilities, and to conduct verification before recognizing each facility as a Gas STAR Gold facility.
- Recognition of Gas STAR Gold status for all facilities and participating companies could be provided through the Natural Gas STAR Gold Program website and at the annual conference.
- EPA is proposing to provide a “Gas STAR Gold” label to acknowledge Gas Star Gold facilities.
- EPA will initiate a stakeholder feedback process and welcomes input on the specific elements of the proposed Gas STAR Gold Program.

Proposed Timeline

Dates & Milestones	
April 2014	Outreach to stakeholders begins, outlining the framework for the Gas STAR Gold Program
May 12, 2014	Natural Gas STAR Annual Implementation Workshop, including discussion of Gas STAR Gold Program
Fall 2014	Formal stakeholder feedback process Finalization of program elements and protocols Launch of Gas STAR Gold Program
January 2015	First Annual Gas STAR Gold period begins
Spring 2016	First Annual Gas STAR Gold reports due to EPA

